Acreage Living

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Cold Weather Pet Tips

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Please follow these guidelines to protect your companion animal when the temperature drops.

Keep your cat indoors when temperatures are below freezing. Outdoors, cats can freeze, become lost or stolen, or be injured or killed. Always securely fasten an up-to-date ID tag on an outdoor cat's collar.

Outdoor cats sometimes sleep under the hoods of cars, where it is warmer. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed. To prevent this, bang loudly on the hood of your car and wait a few seconds before starting the engine to give a cat a chance to escape.

Take dogs for frequent, short walks, rather than one long walk each day. This will reduce the time your animal's sensitive lungs and paws are exposed to the cold.

Always keep your dog on a leash when there is snow or ice outside, especially during a snowstorm. Dogs can lose their scent in snow and ice and easily become lost. More dogs are lost during the winter than any other season.

Clean your dog's legs and paws after a walk in the rain, snow, or ice. Salt and antifreeze can accumulate on paws and make your pet very sick when licked off.

If you own a short-haired breed, consider getting a warm coat or sweater for your dog. Look for one with a high collar or turtleneck that covers your dog from the base of the tail on top and to the belly underneath. While this may seem like a luxury, it is a necessity for many dogs.

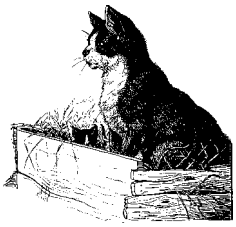
Keep animals indoors with you as much as possible. If you must travel with your pet during cold weather, never leave your dog or cat alone in a car. Your companion animal could freeze to death.

Puppies do not tolerate the cold as well as adult dogs and may be difficult to housebreak during the winter. If necessary, paper train your puppy inside if he/she appears to be sensitive to the weather.

If your dog lives outdoors, make sure he/she has a warm, dry doghouse and increase food supply to keep fur thick and healthy.

Antifreeze, even in very tiny doses, is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Because of its sweet taste,

animals are attracted to it. Be sure to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle. To prevent accidental poisonings, more and more people are using animal-friendly products that contain propylene glycol rather than the traditional products containing ethylene glycol. Call your veterinarian or The ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center (NAPCC) (888-426-4435) if you suspect your animal has been poisoned.



Make sure your companion animal has a warm place to sleep far away from all drafts and off the floor, such as in a dog or cat bed or basket with a warm blanket or pillow in it.

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Ten Winter Energy Tips from the U.S. Department of Energy

1. Add Another Layer of Attic Insulation
Since the majority of homes built before 1980 are under-insulated, heat escapes through the ceiling, past the roof, and into the atmosphere because of lack of insulation in the attic. According to the DOE, one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to cut heating and cooling costs and make a home more comfortable is to add more insulation in the attic. As a general rule, if you have less than 11 to 12 inches of attic insulation, you probably need more.

2. Turn on the Humidifier
It's not just the heat; it's also the humidity. If your furnace doesn't have a built-in humidifier, use a portable unit in frequently occupied areas such as the bedroom and living room. The additional moisture will increase the "heat index" inside your home, making 68° F feel more like 76° F. The relative humidity in the home should be between 20 and 40 percent. To help avoid condensation on windows, lower the percentage as the outside temperature gets colder.

3. Warm Yourself Before Heating the Entire House
Put on a sweater before turning the thermostat dial. Each degree you raise the thermostat on your heating system increases your fuel bill by three percent.

4. **Install a Programmable Thermostat**
Why heat the house when nobody's home? A programmable thermostat can automatically lower and raise your home's air temperature when you're at work or sleeping. By turning your thermostat back from 72° F down to 65° F for eight hours a day, you can save as much as ten percent on your annual heating and cooling costs. If used appropriately, the energy savings will offset the costs for a programmable thermostat (starting at $30) in less than one year.

5. Let the Sun Shine In
Open the window shades on the south and west sides of the house during the day to maximize the warmth of the sun, and close them at night. If you, like half of American homeowners, have single-pane windows, consider replacing them with double-pane windows with a special coating on the glass that reflects heat back into the room during the winter months.

6. Cover the Windows
If you can't afford to replace your single-pane windows, remember to use your storm windows or install a clear plastic film across the inside of your window and frame. The plastic becomes nearly invisible when you heat it with a blow dryer and is relatively inexpensive (typically $4 to $6 per win-

dow). The trapped pocket of air between the plastic film and window acts as an effective insulator, helping to reduce heat loss through the window by 25 to 50 percent.

7. Change Furnace Filters Frequently
You can improve the energy efficiency of your heating and cooling systems by as much as ten percent by cleaning air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed and changing forced air heating system air filters monthly. An alternative to swapping out the replacement filter is to use washable filters (around $20 each). With care, they can last up to five years.

8. Seal the Ducts
The most logical way to stay warm is to only heat living areas, not the attic or unfinished basement. However, in many homes, the warm air generated by the furnace often escapes into the attic or basement before it reaches its intended destination because of cracks or holes in the air ducts. As a result, the furnace works overtime to keep the rest of the house warm. Check your ducts for leaks each fall and use duct tape to repair and seal holes or sections that may have separated. If you are buying new ducts, consider a system that is already surrounded by insulation.

9. Plug the Drafts
The exterior of your house is your first line of defense against drafts, so caulk, seal, and weather-strip around all seams, cracks, and openings. Pay special attention around windows and where siding or bricks and wood trim meet. You can also reduce drafts from the inside by caulking, sealing, and weather-stripping around windows and door frames, and near electrical boxes and plumbing penetrations.

10. Close Vents to Guest Rooms
Today's larger homes often have more rooms than family members to fill them. By closing the vents to one spare bedroom, you can cut your heating bills. You can always open the vents when guests visit for the holidays.

For more energy-efficiency tips, homeowners can call the DOE at 1-800-DOE-3732 to order a free, 36-page Energy Savers booklet or visit the Energy Savers web site at http://www.eren.doe.gov/consumerinfo/energy_savers. The Energy Savers campaign, developed by the Energy Department in partnership with Owens Corning, provides Americans with more than 100 easy and practical energy-efficiency tips and projects.

Storing Fuel at Home

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Many farm and acreage owners store motor fuel at home for tractors, mowers, and other power equipment. On-farm storage of fuel is convenient, but make sure you are storing the fuel properly to meet regulations and protect yourself and your property.

Above-ground on-farm fuel storage in Iowa is divided into three categories depending on the amount of fuel stored. For twenty-five gallons or less, stored in containers of five gallons or less each, simply use an approved red fuel storage container that is clearly marked. Storage tanks over 1100 gallons require registration with the State Fire Marshal's office along with pre-approved plans and secondary containment. Tanks smaller than 1100 gallons do not need plan approval or registration, but must meet the requirements of National Fire Protection Association safety standard NFPA-395.

For tanks of 60 gallons or less, the following rules apply:

- Storage is allowed only in approved tanks.
- Pumps and faucets shall be well-maintained to prevent leaks.
- Multiple tanks may not be connected together.
- Outdoor tanks shall be at least ten feet from any building.
- Indoor tanks are allowed only in buildings used

exclusively for fuel storage and at least ten feet from other buildings and equipped with proper vents for floor-level cross ventilation.

For tanks between 60 gallons and 1100 gallons, the following rules apply:

- Tanks must be constructed with approved practices and material thickness.
- Tanks must have separate fill and vent openings.
- Fill openings must be designed to be locked.
- A free-opening vent must be present and sized according to the tank size (one inch diameter for tanks up to 275 gallons, two inch diameter for tanks up to 900 gallons, and three inch diameter for tanks up to 1100 gallons)
- Tanks must be outside and at least 40 feet from any building.
- Tanks with top openings only shall be mounted at least six inches off the ground and equipped with an approved pump and hose with a locking device.
- Tanks with top openings only shall have an anti-siphon device on the outlet or a self-closing nozzle.
- Elevated tanks with gravity discharge shall be mounted on a suitable stable structure.
- Elevated tanks shall be equipped with an approved hose with self-closing nozzle and locking device.
- Elevated tanks shall be equipped with a manual shut-off valve and a heat-activated automatic valve that closes in the event of a fire.
- All tanks shall be clearly marked with the name of the fuel and the words "FLAMMABLE – KEEP FIRE AND FLAME AWAY" and "KEEP 40 FT FROM BUILDINGS"

Underground storage tanks must comply with a different set of rules administered by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. For more information on above-ground fuel storage, contact your local fire officials or the office of the State Fire Marshal at 515-281-5821 or on-line at http://www.state.ia.us/government/dps/fm/

Aside from the legal issues, there are some other points worth discussing about fuel storage. On the safety side, be sure any fuel storage area is kept clean and free of combustible materials like lumber, brush, and even dead grass. It may seem like common sense, but make sure everybody knows that no smoking or leaf burning is allowed in the vicinity of the fuel storage.

Security of the stored fuel requires some attention. Fuel nozzles should be locked in place so only authorized persons can access the fuel. For ground level tanks with electric pumps, a separate lockout on the power supply to the pump could provide extra security. Locating the fuel storage so it is not visible from the road or driveway may help reduce the risk of theft or tampering.

Evaporation losses from exposed storage tanks can be significant (as much as ten gallons per month from a 300-gallon tank). Painting the tank a light color can help, but shading the tank from direct sunlight is even more effective.

If you choose to store fuel at home, consult with your insurance carrier and local fire officials to make sure your site is safe, secure, and legal. For more information on farm fuel storage, ask for ISU Extension bulletin NCR-0172 "Storing Fuels on the Farm" at your county ISU Extension office or from Extension Publications Distribution at 515-294-5247 or http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/

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